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CLASSROOM METHODS AND DEVICES

HISTORY FOR PREVOCATIONAL BOYS¹

Many years ago Horace Mann said that, before its presentation to children, history should be rewritten. Quite recently, in his book entitled *The New History*, James Harvey Robinson, professor of history, Columbia University, pointed out that the writers of school textbooks were governed by tradition in the selection of material rather than by the "needs, capacity, interests, and future career of the boys and girls" to whom the history is to be taught. He shows, however, that some changes have been made in the right direction. He says:

Our most recent manuals venture to leave out some of the traditional facts least appropriate for an elementary review of the past and endeavor to bring their narrative into relation, *here and there* [the italics are ours], with modern needs and demands. But I think that this process of eliminating the old and substituting the new might be carried much farther; that our best manuals are still crowded with facts that are not worth while bringing to the attention of our boys and girls and still omit in large measure those things that are best worth telling.

He intimates that it is possible to make such a selection of material "from the boundless wealth of the past" as will be peculiarly enlightening to a particular group of children, and he also suggests what this material should consist of if intended for children in the industrial schools.

In determining what topics should be included in a prevocational history course for children, the teachers of the experimental classes, noted in the initial article of this series, have been guided, first, by "the needs, capacity, interests, and future career of the boys," secondly, by the fact that an extremely limited amount of time was

¹ Acknowledgment should be made of the fact that this problem of history for prevocational classes has been made the subject of several studies by graduate students in the Department of Education, and that these studies have been of material help to the authors of this article. Especial mention is due Miss Miriam Besley, who worked out the initial course for our industrial class. The outlines submitted in this article, however, are those now in use in the prevocational classes of the Lane Technical High School.

available, and thirdly, by their opinions, clarified by careful and sympathetic experimentation, as to the most fruitful lessons which the past holds for the coming industrial workers of the country. While the topics may not agree closely with those suggested by Professor Robinson, it is believed that the plan, as a whole, well illustrates the principle of selection which he sets forth so clearly.

It has been noted previously that certain subjects, heretofore reserved for high school or even for college, have been given to prevocational classes. Of course they have been simplified and made concrete and have been brought within the comprehension of those children. One such subject is history and another is economics. The two in their interrelation form an eminently practical and a truly cultural study for prevocational pupils. In other words, these children should know something of history, but the particular phases of history which will be of genuine value to them are not the political or the military phases, nor even the industrial phases, narrowly considered, but those which tell of the relation of the worker to his work and to the rest of society. It is that history which tells of the methods by which the worker has maintained himself in life and has raised his class out of slavery to full citizenship. It is worthy of note that the American Federation of Labor has stated officially that industrial schools should teach the children, between fourteen and sixteen years of age, a sound system of "economics," including the theory of collective bargaining. The history, then, which is appropriate for these children is economic history and might well be entitled "A History of Work and Workers."

The Manhattan Trade School considers it necessary to include such instruction in its course of study, the subject being entitled simply "Industrial Conditions." The principal of the school, in commenting on the course, says:

This course is designed to awaken in pupils an intelligent interest in industrial questions, and to acquaint them with the factory laws in such a way that they shall feel their responsibility in helping to enforce them.

In order to give largeness of view, several talks are given on industrial history, starting with primitive forms of industry and leading up to the introduction of machinery which brought about the industrial revolution.

A discussion of the industrial revolution and its effects shows how the need for factory laws arose, and these laws are then taken up for study. Copies

of the abstract posted in the factories are procured from the department of factory inspection and those portions which relate to conditions the pupils will meet in trade are read and discussed, and suggestions made as to ways in which workers can help in enforcing the laws.

Following this work comes a reading and study of some simple article explaining the principles of trade unions, with the twofold purpose of familiarizing the pupils with those principles and interesting them in literature along the lines of industrial problems.

As an additional step a brief sketch is given showing the nature of the work done by such organizations as the Consumers' League and the National Association for Labor Legislation in their efforts to improve industrial conditions.

The outline given below forms the basis for the work:

1. Primitive industries.
2. The industrial revolution.
3. Factory laws.
4. Trade unions.
5. The Consumers' League, etc.

In the preceding article it was shown that a study of industrial hygiene led inevitably to the conclusion that the lives of workmen are held more sacred year by year, and that greater efforts are constantly being made to conserve their interests. This fact, once established, may be taken as a starting-point for the study of "Economic History." In other words, the study of history in the prevocational class should be addressed to the problem of making clear to the children the social value of the workman as a human being. It must be shown that all other factors *may* be improved without advancing the interests of the workers at all. Such factors, for example, as cheaper raw materials of industry; better means of distribution; the fuller development of automatic machinery; the elimination of waste material or waste time—all these and other improvements *might* be brought about without essentially changing the lot of the masses of workmen. It cannot be denied that much of the instruction given in the schools under the name "Industrial History" entirely ignores the *workman* himself and merely relates to the wonderful development of modern industrial methods and the enormous increase in material commodities resulting therefrom. It should also be shown that unless the workers succeed in getting for themselves their share of the increasing benefits, at every state of industrial progress, these benefits will certainly go, in large measure, to the capitalistic class.

By making "the progress of the worker" the dominant factor in the course a vital element common to all times will be established, which element will serve to hold together and to relate *all* phases of history provided the study should be continued beyond the pre-vocational class. Professor Frank T. Carlton in his *History and Problems of Organized Labor* says:

For indefinite centuries men have been seeking for the solution of various problems relating to the toilers. Students of ancient history have disclosed the struggles of the plebeian or slave class against the patrician or ruling class centuries before the Christian era. The labor problem is a problem of all nations, of all peoples, and of all centuries. The factors change but the problem remains. History is really a story of the struggle of the mass upward; true history is a chronicle of the relations of man to man in the struggle for existence and the subdual of natural forces.

The purpose of the following course, therefore, is to give the children an elementary appreciation of the various steps in the upward progress of the worker, and especially an understanding of the organizations of labor and of capital as they exist today, to the end that such study may ultimately produce workmen who will have a clear knowledge of their own conditions, their own rights, and their own duties. A brief outline follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

The course starts with an exposition of the more obvious features of *present-day* industrial conditions in order to develop a strong personal and practical interest in the study of the economic phases of history. These present-day features are as follows: the factory system of production and the saving effected by it; the modern methods of scientific management; the plan of organization of different business concerns, as, for example, the firm and the corporation; the relative advantages of working for each; the reasons for the corporation; the reasons for trade unions and for labor unions; and the relation of capital and labor.

II. THE STRUGGLE UP FROM SLAVERY

The next step is to outline the history of the masses as the workers have progressed through the following stages:

- a) Slavery resulting from conquest of the weaker tribe by the stronger.
- b) Slavery as a condition of birth. The slave class.
- c) Essential features of feudalism and the condition of the land slaves.
- d) The evolution of the craftsman and his emancipation through skill.
- e) The craft guilds; apprentices, journeymen, masters; the employers and employed frequently in the same guild.

- f) The rapid development of the factory method of production with its specialization, large-scale production, automatic machinery, child and woman labor. These methods of production had the effect of forcing down wages and of glutting the labor market, thereby reducing large numbers of workmen to a new kind of slavery.

III. ORGANIZED LABOR

The development of organized labor in America with its principles, problems, and history is then taken up as a means of studying the methods by which the worker is raising himself again, this time from an economic slavery to an economic freedom. This concludes with a brief mention of labor in politics with a discussion of the extent to which such movements have benefited the worker.

IV. THE WORKER AS A CITIZEN

The worker as a member of a labor organization sinks his identity. As a citizen he should stand as an individual. This conception introduces a brief study of civics in its more personal relations.

Some objection may be made to the foregoing outline on the ground that it seems to omit many fundamentals of United States history which all children should be taught. In working out the details of the course it will be found that, if there is enough time, ample opportunity is afforded for all necessary features of such history throughout the last half of the course. For example, early American history may be introduced as a part of Sec. II, beginning at *e*). This would include a study of the industries of the Colonial period, the condition of apprentices in New England, and the economic reasons for negro slavery in the South. Ample material for this will be found in chaps. ii and iii of Carlton's *History and Problems of Organized Labor*. Where there is a reasonable hope that the children are to remain in school for a sufficient time, and where a genuine interest has been secured, such excursions into the more general phases of United States history should undoubtedly be made, but the paramount importance of the development of industrial and social intelligence should always be kept clearly in mind. There are several history textbooks today which give some attention to the factors which this course makes central and paramount and these books can be used with great advantage. One such, for example, is *History of the United States*, by Bourne and Benton, which under such titles as "Immigration," "Indentured Servants,"

"Colonial Industries," etc., contains much interesting and pertinent material.

ILLUSTRATIVE ELABORATION OF OUTLINES

The limits of this article will not allow of the full elaboration of the outlines given above. Two illustrations of such elaboration are given for the purpose of showing what kind of facts have proved interesting to prevocational classes and of indicating roughly the methods which have been found effective in stimulating and holding the eager interest of the boys.

I. INTRODUCTION

What is history?

Why should we study history?

Besides the pleasure it gives us to know the story of how the civilized world has grown, and the help it gives us in understanding what is happening today, it also helps us to decide what we ought to do ourselves.

Some day we shall vote. A knowledge of history ought to help us to vote intelligently. One may be elected to a public office. In that case history should teach one how to be a more efficient officer.

But all of us have to work, and a knowledge of history really ought to make it possible for us to work more successfully, and to choose better what kind of work to do. Why?

Who did most of the work in the South before the Civil War?

Who did most of the work in ancient Greece?

Did these men decide what kind of work they would do or for whom they would work? Why?

Because they were slaves.

What is a slave?

What people do most of the work in Chicago today?

All of us.

Do most of us decide what we shall do and for whom we shall work?

In theory, yes. The wiser, stronger, better-trained men and women do choose to a large extent.

Why?

Because we are not slaves.

Can those who work in the large factories decide from day to day what they will do? Why not?

When and how did it happen that working-men became freemen instead of slaves? Would you like to know? History of the right kind will tell you. Shall we study it some day?

When you go to work would you like to decide what you will do and for whom you will work?

If you had the opportunity to choose would you know how?

Would you rather work for an individual, a firm, or a corporation?

What is a firm and what does partnership mean?

What is a corporation?

Can you bring to class next week the names of some (a) individuals who are in business and who employ others; (b) firms; (c) corporations? (a) is generally written thus: J. Jones, Hair Cutting; (b) thus: Jones & Smith, or Jones, Smith & Co.; (c) thus: The Jones-Smith Company, The Chicago Telephone Company.

Will you ask your fathers, brothers, and sisters who are at work whether they work for individuals, firms, or corporations?

How long have there been such things as industrial corporations?

Not many years, hardly more than two or three generations. The very large corporations are sometimes called trusts.

Why did men think of forming corporations?

The chief reason was that the production was getting to be on a larger and larger scale and few individuals could get money enough of their own to build and equip the plants, so they organized corporations, under charters from the state, and sold "shares" of stock. With the money thus secured they built factories and ran the business. The profits are divided among the "stockholders" in proportion to the number of shares they own. Thus large-scale production made the corporation necessary.

What is the advantage to the community of large-scale, factory production?
Lowers the cost.

Would it be interesting to know how, little by little, business and industry grew to its present state?

Will that help us to see how it will still further develop?

Is factory work and business under corporation form on the increase?

More than one-third of the wage-workers in the manufacturing industries of Illinois work for corporations which produce more than one million dollars worth of goods every year.

Before we go back to study the early days of industry, we ought to talk a little about the present times, and such facts as the foregoing help us to understand. Perhaps you can bring to class some interesting things about working conditions today.

Are there more men *directing* the corporations or more men *working* for corporations?

Which ones get the most money? Which have the most power?

What do you know about "capital" and "labor"? A very large question; but we must know some things about these terms and what they stand for. Capitalists control their own and *other* people's money.

Why do workmen "organize," that is, "form unions"?

It becomes necessary to do so because the corporation is a combination of capital, and labor must "combine" to hold its own.

Would you like to study a little about "labor unions" later?

Bring to class any information you can about them gained from relatives or friends, especially those in unions.

II. THE STRUGGLE UP FROM SLAVERY¹

In telling about the life and progress of an individual we might describe what he did day by day or we might show what he had achieved at different stages in his development. For example, we could describe him when, as a boy of six years, he first went to school. We might next see him again when, at fourteen, he graduated from the elementary school and debated the question whether he would go to high school or go to work. Let us say that he took a two-year vocational course and that we find him at sixteen taking his first job. At twenty-one we see him, now a man, casting his first vote. At thirty he has perhaps just accomplished some worthy thing for which he has been working for years. Many years later we may see him, toward the close of life, looking back over it all and advising the younger men as to what things in life he had found satisfying.

In telling about the progress of the worker through the centuries we shall adopt this method and shall show his condition at six different periods of his development, remembering that many years or even centuries have passed between one stage and the next.

But first we may well ask the question, "Why are there those who have to work hard all the time and others who apparently do little or no laborious work?" Human nature seems to be such that few will do disagreeable work of any kind if they can make others do it for them. Furthermore, while there is almost always a better and an easier way of doing any kind of laborious work, the better way has almost always been "invented" or devised by the one actually engaged in doing the work. This requires ability and intelligence, and it seems that for many centuries men of ability apparently used their intelligence to get away from work by forcing the less able to do it for them. Thus a working class was firmly established. Throughout the history of the world, therefore, masses of men and women have been *compelled* to do the hard, dull, disagreeable, dangerous work—compelled in different ways, but always compelled. Do you know any of the different ways by which this compulsion has been exercised?

Another illustration that the weaker were obliged to do the drudgery may be found in the fact that the Indian "braves" did the hunting and compelled their women to do the "work." If the women had been the stronger, it might have been otherwise.

¹ The following is not intended to be read by the class or to the class, but is merely suggestive to the teacher.

The six stages in the progress of the worker will be pretty clearly understood by us if we talk over together the following facts and add to them from our own general knowledge and from what we can read in a few books. (Thurston's *Economics and Industrial History* will supply the necessary minimum for parts c) to f) of the following.)

a) *The Slave by Conquest*

Perhaps the first slavery, as we think of slavery today, was when one small tribe fought with and conquered another and weaker tribe, and then compelled the conquered tribe to do its menial work for it, and killed those who would not. The ancient Greeks and Romans had numerous slaves of this kind, men who were born free, but were "thrown into slavery."

b) *The Slave Class*

Little by little, however, there was developed a slave class. Children were "born into slavery" and educated to service. The most familiar example to us in the United States, of course, is the condition of negro slavery before the Civil War. Perhaps more interesting illustrations can be drawn from the history of Greece and Rome where many of the slaves were of very superior peoples, the equal intellectually of their masters.

c) *Feudalism*

Feudalism grew up under government too weak to preserve that order which the state should insure to all its citizens. As the government could not give this protection, the strongest men, in England called Earls, Barons, and Lords, with their soldiers and followers, were called upon by weak freemen and small landowners to accept their services and, in return, to give them protection. That is, the one asking for protection became, to a certain extent, a kind of slave. There were different classes among the people who acknowledged "fealty" to the Lords, but the conditions of those who tilled the soil were nearest to those of slavery as we know it. As illustrating the conditions of the serfs of the feudal system we may well take as example the villeins on the manors of England. (See Thurston, pp. 52-55.)

Of course this kind of "serfdom" or slavery varied in the different parts of Europe and in different centuries. (Note the date as given by Thurston for this English example. William Hard says that "in 1807 two-thirds of the inhabitants of Prussia were serfs, bound to the soil.")

d) *Freedom through Craftsmanship*

During the so-called "Home Period," individuals, while doing all the work required of the serf or villein, still had a little time to work for themselves. Again, these individuals sometimes developed special ability in some one craft. Thurston notes this in an interesting way by calling attention to several English names which clearly indicate this fact. While all had to be farmers, some became known as Carpenter, Baker, Butcher, Smith, etc., because they had

become especially proficient in the craft in question. Suggest other names: Weaver, Webber, Mason, Fisher, Wheeler, Tailor, Tyler, etc.

In process of time the craftsman came to devote all his time to his trade. It also developed that these craftsmen gathered in towns where work could be found, since now the work was not done directly for the consumer. As the man became a craftsman instead of a farmer he was less restricted in his movements from place to place, though he was still subject to many regulations which workmen do not have today (Thurston, p. 176). He was much less a slave to a master, though he might be a slave of "circumstances."

The craft guilds imposed regulations, but the workman was a member of the guild and so had something to do with making these regulations. On the whole we may say that through the skilled craft the workman finally became a freeman.

e) The Worker and the Guild

How, for a time, the skilled worker maintained himself as a freeman, during the early days of the wage system, must be studied in the guilds. There is much that may be said about them but, for our particular study, i.e., the rise from slavery to freedom, it is most interesting and pertinent to note the discussion given in Thurston on p. 77. This shows that the skilled workman was, to a considerable extent, "his own master." It also shows that this condition cannot last long since it has in it the seeds of its own destruction. It also shows us why, and indicates that strength for labor can be permanent only by making it equal with capital. Although his position is not to last long our skilled workman is free. Has he, with the capitalist, forgotten the unskilled and the learners? Is this his weakness?

f) Conditions Leading to a New Slavery

The conditions which eventually broke down the advantage thus far gained by the skilled worker were specialization, large-scale production, and automatic machinery which utilized unskilled labor, including the labor of children and women.

These resulted in an over-supplying of labor, thus forcing down wages, making work irregular or uncertain, narrowing the "margin of safety," to say nothing of comfort, making the worker dependent on the capitalist for "the opportunity and the right to work," and actually producing, for many thousand people even in this rich country, what the socialists call "wage slavery."

This leads directly to the history and problems of organized labor, the purpose of which is to again enable the worker to struggle up, but this time, let us hope, with a larger percentage of all workers, not merely the highly skilled but all who can be helped by standing together for the good of all.

METHODS

This whole subject must be treated mainly by the "lecture method," since little reading can be expected of the boys, owing

both to the nature of the material and to the extreme difficulty of finding any connected presentation of it simple and brief enough to come within their comprehension.

The value of the subject, however, will be all but lost unless the teacher can succeed in stimulating the imagination and thus making the subject vital and vivid. This can be done by interpreting the "lecture method" as a "story-telling method" and by enriching the material in every possible way. The teacher should be able to get from the few references, given at the end of this article, interest and information sufficient to carry the work to a successful issue, provided too much is not demanded of the pupils. Frankly, little of the traditional kind of reaction can be expected, but the thoughtful teacher will value far above this the eager and discriminating questions with which the young students of "economic history" ply their instructor. He will probably be unable to answer all these questions, but so much the better, because an entirely new relationship will have been established and both teacher and pupil have much to gain thereby.

But of course the boys must be given something to do. At the beginning, the principal source of information for the boys, aside from the "lectures," should be the people whom they can question outside the schools—their relatives and friends. It follows, therefore, that the school period must be almost wholly given to "story-telling" and "round-table" discussion. The teacher may be surprised at the amount and variety of information contributed by the boys.

A little later the pupils can be assigned short, well-chosen references to read. These should be carefully marked and definitely limited, and should be easily accessible. They can be chosen from a variety of sources, some of which will be noted at the close of this article.

From the beginning the pupils should keep notebooks. The "notes," however, should be largely dictated by the teacher at the close of the general discussion. If, in the beginning, these notes consist of but *one question a day*, together with the briefest possible answer, legibly written, the teacher should be satisfied. In this way a textbook, meager to be sure, is built up little by little. The

joy of the pupils as they look back two or three weeks and realize that they know the answers to the various questions is, in itself, ample proof that the subject is vital and that the method is sound.

In place of the pupil's ability to give certain historical facts and dates, the teacher of this kind of history must be glad to accept an enthusiasm for the discussion of the question presented and a growing interest in and intelligence about our marvelous, complicated, twentieth-century industrial life. When carried out as above suggested and by an enthusiastic teacher, such results may be confidently predicted.

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